DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 087 956 CG 008 536

AUTHOR Brooks, Linda
TITLE Interactive Effects of Sex and Status on Self-Disclosure.
INSTITUTION Maryland Univ., College Park. Counseling Center.
PUB DATE 73
NOTE 17p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50
DESCRIPTORS *Counseling Effectiveness; *Counseling Theories; Counselor Acceptance; Interaction Process Analysis; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Interviews; Research Projects; *Sex Differences

ABSTRACT

This study reexamined the effects of client sex and counselor sex on self-disclosure in a controlled analogue situation using a measure of self-disclosure that would reflect the affective dimension. A secondary aim was to determine if subject evaluation of the interviews would parallel self-disclosure results. An equal number (40) of male and female college students were rated on self-disclosure in interviews with either male or female interviewers of high or low status. Results indicate that: (1) males disclose more to females while females disclose more to males; (2) dyads containing a female result in more disclosure than all-male dyads; (3) males reveal more to high status interviewers, while females tend to disclose more to low status interviewers; and (4) high as opposed to low status male interviewers elicit more disclosure from all subjects, while the status of female interviewers results in no significant differences. The need for use of multiple measures in self-disclosure research as well as implications for client-therapist matching are noted. (Author)

ED 087956

COUNSELING CENTER

Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

College Park, Maryland

CG 008 536

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 087956

Counseling Center

University of Maryland

College Park, Maryland

INTERACTIVE EFFECTS OF SEX AND STATUS ON SELF-DISCLOSURE

Linda Brooks

Research Report # 12-73

COUNSELING CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

INTERACTIVE EFFECTS OF SEX AND STATUS ON SELF-DISCLOSURE

Linda Brooks

Research Report # 12-73

Abstract

Forty male and forty female college students were rated on self-disclosure in interviews with either male or female interviewers of high or low status. A 2x2x2 analysis of variance revealed that (a) males disclosed more to females while females disclosed more to males, (b) dyads containing a female resulted in more disclosure than all-male dyads, (c) males revealed more to high status interviewers, while females tended to disclose more to low status interviewers, and (d) high as opposed to low status male interviewers elicited more disclosure from all subjects, while status of female interveiwers resulted in no significant differences. The need for use of multiple measures in self- disclosure research, as well as implications for client-therapist matching, were noted.

INTERACTIVE EFFECTS OF SEX AND STATUS ON SELF-DISCLOSURE

Variables such as client self-exploration, self-disclosure, experiencing, etc., have been considered to be important to both the process and outcome of psychotherapy (Carkhuff, 1969; Carkhuff & Berenson, 1967; Truax & Carkhuff, 1967). While experience indicates that clients differ in their initial efforts to reveal themselves, little is known about the variables which moderate these differences. Some research suggests that sex of the client and sex of the therapist may be relevant factors.

Janofsky (1971) found in an analogue study that females disclosed more than males. In a counseling study, Fuller (1963) found that not only were females higher on expression of feeling, but also that client-counselor pairs which contained a female, regardless of whether the female was a client or a counselor, produced more self-disclosure than all-male dyads. Vondracek (1970) found men to be more disclosing than women, while Jourard & Friedman (1970) obtained mixed results. The research is thus contradictory and inconclusive regarding the effects of client and counselor sex on self-disclosure.

One limitation of the previously cited research is that the measures of self-disclosure failed to take the affective dimension of disclosure into account. Disclosure was measured by counting the number of "I" statements followed by affect words (Janofsky, 1971); counting the number of high vs. low intimacy topics the subject was willing to discuss (Certner, 1971: Jourard & Friedman, 1970: Vondracek, 1970); or coding the topics discussed, as recalled by the counselor after the interview (Fuller, 1963). The style, or emotional involvement, of the subject was not considered. An additional limitation of the research by Fuller (1963) and Janofsky (1971) was that interviewer behavior

was not controlled.

The purpose of the present study was to reexamine the effects of client sex and counselor sex on self-disclosure in a controlled analogue situation using a measure of self-disclosure that would take into account the affective dimension. A third variable, status of the interviewer, was included for exploratory purposes. A secondary aim was to determine if subject evaluation of the interviews would parallel self-disclosure results. It was assumed that the results would have implications for client-counselor matching.

Three hypotheses were generated: (a) Females would be more disclosing than males, (b) Subject-interviewer pairs containing a female would result in greater disclosure than all-male pairs, and (c) Subjects would be more disclosing when the interviewer was presented as a high status rather than a low status person.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 40 male and 40 female unmarried undergraduate introductory psychology students between 18-25 years of age with no previous counseling experience and no preference as to sex of a future counselor. Students received extra points for participation in the study. Interviewers were two male and two female doctoral students in counseling of approximately the same age (24-28 years) and with similar experience in college counseling (one-two years).

Procedure

Each interviewer was randomly assigned five male and five female subjects for both the low and high status condition, resulting in 20 interviews each.

The basic design conformed to a 2 x 2 x 2 fixed effects model with two levels each of subject sex, and interviewer status. The first 10 interviews conducted by each interviewer were under low status conditions and the last 10 were under high status conditions.

Prior to the interview, subjects were told that the purpose of the study was to compare the personal concerns of students who had not sought counseling with those who had. Upon reporting to the receptionist of a counseling center, subjects were given an information sheet to read which reiterated the purpose of the experiment and introduced their interviewer as either high or low status. Following the reading of the information sheet and immediately prior to the interview, subjects completed a Problem Checklist. The checklist was designed to stimulate subject consideration of problems to discuss in the interview.

Interviews were approximately 15 minutes in length. To control for the effect of distance on self-disclosure (Jourard & Friedman, 1970), interview chairs were placed in a fixed perpendicular poisition to each other, measuring 30 inches from the left leg of the subject's chair to the right leg of the interviewer's chair.

Immediately following the interview, subjects were escorted by the experimenter to another office to complete an evaluation questionnaire. Approximately one month after the interviews first began, subjects were sent a letter explaining the study in more detail and the reason for the interviewer status deception.

Status Manipulation

The status condition was manipulated in three ways. First, immediately prior to the interview, subjects read a paragraph describing their interviewer. Under high status conditions, subjects read the following:

It has been found helpful in the past for students to know something about their counselor. Your counselor is Dr. _____. He is one of the youngest, yet most experienced counselors at the University Counseling Center. In addition to working here several years, he has received much additional training beyond his Ph.D. Students who seek counseling frequently ask for him specifically and seem to feel that he is warm, skilled, competent, and helpful.

Under low status conditions, subjects read:

It has been found helpful in the past for students to know something about their counselor. Your counselor is Mr. _____. He is a student currently engaged in training in counseling students, and has been working part-time in the University Counseling Center since August. He has limited experience counseling students. The few students who have seen him seem to feel that he is somewhat helpful.

A second status manipulation was completed by the counseling center receptionist while the subject was reading the aforementioned information sheet. The receptionist first asked the subject if he knew the identity of his interviewer. In the high status condition, the receptionist then said, enthusiastically, "Oh, you have Dr. _____. He's been here a long time and he's really good." In the low status condition, the receptionist said, indifferently, "Oh, you have Mr. _____. He's OK."

The third status manipulation involved the use of offices differing in location and decor. High status interviews were held in two nicely furnished counselor offices. Low status interviews were held in sparsely furnished rooms located in the basement of the counseling center.

Interviewer Behavior

Interviewers were trained to conduct the interviews in as nearly the same manner as possible. The intent was that subjects would differentially respond

only to the sex and status dimensions during their interviews and not to differing techniques or personality characteristics of the interviewers.

Following a standardized introduction, interviewer behavior was limited to occasional reflective statements of immediately expressed feelings, and/or standardized questions encouraging further discussion.

Dependent Variables

Subjects were rated on self-disclosure using a slight revision of the Revealingness Scale (Suchman, 1965). The scale takes into account both the content and the style, or affect, dimension of self-disclosure; how a person talks about himself is considered as well as what the person says about himself.

The original Revealingness Scale is a 7-point continuum with 0 indicating the lowest and 6 the highest level of disclosure. In Levels 0, 1, and 2, the content is "external" and the style is mechanical and distant. In Levels 3-6, the content is "self" and the style ranges from mechanical and distant to self-involved and betraying affect. Preliminary work with the scale by the experimenter suggested the scale failed to take into account responses reflecting affective involvement in external content. Consequently, a new Level 3 was created to supply the missing level. The original Level 3 became Level 4; the original Level 4 became Level 5, etc. The revision resulted in an 8-point scale.

An additional change made in the use of the scale was that the segments were rated for modal level of response rather than highest level of response, as suggested by Suchman (1965).

For rating purposes, two three-minute segments were selected from each interview; the first 3-minutes and the middle 3-minutes. One male and one female graduate student were trained as raters. One-half of the total number of segments (160) were rated by the experimenter and one rater and one-half by the experimenter and a second rater. Each set of 80 segments was organized so

as to consist of an equal number of high and low status interviews and an equal number from each interviewer. Raters were blind to the experimental conditions under which the interviews were held. The product-moment correlation for both sets of raters was .72.

Subject evaluation of the interviews was assessed with the Counselor Evaluation Inventory (Linden, Stone, & Schertzer, 1965), a 21-item questionnaire consisting of three factors: counseling climate, counselor comfort, and client satisfaction.

Two additional items were included in the inventory to check on the status manipulation. The first item asked subjects to rate the interviewer's experience on a five point scale, with 1 indicating the lowest and 5 the highest level of experience. The second item was an open-ended question asking subjects to recall what they had read about the interviewer prior to the interview.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

The two items included on the Counseling Evaluation Inventory to check on the status manipulation were subjected to statistical analyses. Interviewer experience was rated significantly higher in the high status than the low status condition ($t = 3.35$, $df = 76$, $p < .01$). Subject recall of information received about the interviewer prior to the interview was sorted into three response categories: positive, negative, and neutral comments concerning the experience and skill of the interviewer. A Chi Square analysis revealed significant differences ($X^2 = 32.54$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$), with more positive and fewer negative and neutral comments being made about the high than the low status interviewers. Thus, the status manipulation was considered successful.

The assumption that the four interviewers conducted the interviews in a similar manner and did not affect subjects differentially was tested with a one-way analysis of variance of self-disclosure ratings and Counselor Evaluation Inventory scores. Non-significant F-ratios were found for all measures, indicating that the four interviewers did not elicit differential effects. Further analyses with interviewers classified by sex was judged a valid procedure.

Self-disclosure and Interview Evaluations

The two self-disclosure ratings (the first and middle 3-minutes) were tested for significance by separate 3-way analyses of variance. Significant results were found only for the first 3-minute segment. Tables 1 and 2 present the means and standard deviations and the results of a 3-way analysis variance of disclosure ratings for the first segment.

- -

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

- -

The analysis of variance (Table 1) shows no significant main effects, indicating that, overall, neither subject sex, interviewer sex, nor interviewer status affected self-disclosure. Subject sex interacted significantly however, with both interviewer sex ($p < .05$) and interviewer status ($p < .05$). Duncan's multiple-range test (Edwards, 1968) of the former showed that male subjects disclosed significantly more to female than to male interviewers, while female subjects disclosed more to male than to female interviewers ($p < .05$). In addition, subject disclosure was highest in dyads including a female, regardless of whether the female was a subject or an interviewer ($p < .05$).

Duncan's multiple-range test of the Subject Sex x Interviewer Status interaction showed that interviewer status tended to affect male and female disclosure in opposite directions. Male subjects disclosed more in the high than the low status condition ($p < .05$), while female subjects showed a tendency to disclose more in the low than the high status condition ($p < .10$). Also, male subjects in the low status condition disclosed significantly less than all other combinations of subject sex and interviewer status.

Duncan's multiple-range test of the remaining significant interaction between interviewer sex and interviewer status ($p < .05$) revealed that all subjects disclosed more to a male interviewer ascribed high rather than low status ($p < .05$). Subjects showed no differences in disclosure when the status of a female interviewer was varied. Within the two status conditions, differences in self-disclosure occurred as a function of interviewer sex. When interviewer status was high, subjects disclosed more to male than female interviewers ($p < .05$). When interviewer status was low, subjects disclosed more to female than male interviewers ($p < .05$).

Three-way analyses of variance of each of the four scores on the Counselor Evaluation Inventory (comfort, climate, satisfaction, and total) showed a significant main effect for subject sex on the climate factor. Females rated the interview climate significantly more positive than did male subjects ($F = 4.444$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). No main effects were significant for the remaining scores.

A significant interaction between interviewer sex and status was found for all four Counselor Evaluation Inventory scores ($p < .05$). Duncan's multiple-range test on climate, comfort, and total scores revealed that high status male interviewers received more positive ratings than low status male interviewers while low status female interviewers received more positive

ratings than high status female interviewers ($p < .05$). On the satisfaction factor, both male and female high status interviewers received more positive ratings than low status interviewers, although for male interviewers, the difference did not reach conventional requirements for significance ($p < .10$).

Discussion

Only the prediction that subjects would be more disclosing in dyads containing a female, was supported. Contrary to prediction, females were not more disclosing than men, nor were subjects more disclosing to high than low status interviewers. Both interviewer sex and status, however, affected male and female disclosure differentially.

The finding of no differences in male and female disclosure is contradictory to previous research by Fuller (1963) and Janofsky (1971). While an immediate resolution of the discrepant results is not possible, it is suggestive to recall that neither the study by Fuller or Janofsky took into account the affective, or style, dimension of self-disclosure. The results of these two studies, then, together with the present one and those of Certner (1971) and Jourard and Friedman (1970), suggest that women may <u>talk about</u> their feelings more readily than men, but they may not <u>express themselves</u> affectively nor discuss high intimacy topics more readily then men.

The discussion thus far leads directly to the question, how should self-disclosure be measured and defined? Cozby (1973) has suggested that definitions, and by implication, measurements, include three basic parameters: (1) breadth, or amount, (2) depth, or intimacy, and (3) duration, or time spent. The Revealingness scale suggests a fourth; namely, style, or affect. It would seem that future self-disclosure research should use multiple measures, since the use of one measure assumes an erroneous unidimensionality.

Such an approach might also resolve the contradictory results on sex differences in self-disclosure. Perhaps males and females differ depending on which parameter of disclosure is measured.

As predicted, male interviewer-male subject pairs resulted in the least self-disclosure. This result is particularly noteworthy since it replicates that of Fuller (1963). It is tempting to conclude that the presence of a female facilitates self-disclosure. Since female subjects disclosed less to female than male interviewers, and males disclosed less to male than female interviewers, however, it seems more likely that either self-disclosure is inhibited by same-sex dyads or facilitated by opposite-sex dyads. Cozby (1973) called attention to these two opposing forces operating in self-dislcosure--a force operating to facilitate and a force operating to inhibit disclosure. He further noted that most researchers study the former to the neglect of the latter. Unfortunately, the design of the present study does not permit conclusions to be drawn regarding which, if either, of the two forces is more salient. The conclusion can be drawn that when self-disclosure is rated globally on content and style, initial levels are higher in opposite-sex dyads. Again, these results may differ according to which parameter of disclosure is measured.

Turning to the status dimension, males and females tended to show opposite effects; namely, males disclosed more to high than low status interviewers, while females showed a tendency to disclose more to low than high status interviewers. Also, high as opposed to low status male interviewers elicited greater self-disclosure from both male and female subjects while the status of the female interviewers did not affect subject disclosure. Apparently when differential status levels are associated with males, initial self-disclosure is affected. The effects of status on disclosure when associated

with females is less clear. One possible explanation is that status, as defined in the present study, is irrelevant to females. Another hypothesis would be that status does not operate in either a simple or unidimensional manner. More research is needed to determine the effects, if any, of the status variable insofar as females are concerned.

One of the assumptions of the present study was that the results would have implications for the assignment of clients to counselors toward the aim of enhancing initial self-disclosure. The results suggest that self-disclosure may be facilitated by: (1) assigning opposite-sex client-counselor pairs, (2) maximizing the status of male counselors for both male and female clients, and (3) maximizing the status of any counselor assigned to male clients. The tentative nature of these conclusions must be emphasized, however, until the present study is replicated, especially with real clients.

An additional aspect of the results should be noted. Since significant results occurred only for disclosure ratings on the initial segment of the interview, one conclusion might be that the effects of contextual variables, such as sex and status of the counselor, dissipate rapidly. Another possibility exists. A consistent positive relationship has been found between counselor empathy and client depth of self-exploration. The nature of the instructions to the interviewers in the present study may have caused the interviewers to exhibit low levels of empathy. The fact that self-disclosure means showed a general decline from the early portion of the interview to the middle portion, may suggest that the possibly low levels of empathy offered by the interviewers rapidly depressed self-disclosure, thus, masking the effects of interviewer sex and status. A study incorporating higher, but consistent levels of empathy would eliminate the possible masking effects of low levels of empathy.

References

Carkhuff, R. R. Helping and human relations, Volume II: Practice and research. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1969.

Carkhuff, R. R., & Berenson, B. G. Beyond counseling and therapy. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1967.

Certner, C. The exchange of self-disclosure in same-sexed and heterosexual groups of strangers. Dissertation Abstracts, 1971, 31 (9A), 4885.

Cozby, P. C. Self-disclosure: A literature review. Psychological Bulletin, 1973, 79, 73-91.

Edwards, A. L. Experimental design in psychological research. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1968.

Fuller, F. P. Influence of sex of counselor and of client on client expressions of feeling. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1963, 10, 34-40.

Janofsky, A. I. Affective self-disclosure in telephone versus face to face interviews. Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 1971, 11, 93-103.

Jourard, S. M., & Friedman, R. Experimenter-subject "distance" and self-disclosure. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 1970, 15, 278-282.

Linden, J. D., Stone, S. C., & Schertzer, B. Development and evaluation of an inventory for rating counseling. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1965, 44, 267-276.

Suchman, D. S. A scale for the measurement of revealingness in spoken behavior. Unpublished masters thesis, The Ohio State University, 1965.

Truax, C. B., & Carkhuff, R. R. The experimental manipulation of therapeutic conditions. Journal of Consulting Psychology, 1965, 29, 119-124.

Truax, C. B., & Carkhuff, R. R. Toward effective counseling and psychotherapy. Chicago: Aldine, 1967.

Vondracek, S. I. C. The measurement and correlates of self-disclosure in preadolescents. Dissertation Abstracts, 1970, 30 (11), 5230.

Table 1

ANOVA of Self-Disclosure by Interviewer Status, Interviewer Sex, and Subject Sex

Source	SS	df	MS	F
A (Interviewer Sex)	.20	1	.20	.128
B (Subject Sex)	2.45	1	2.45	1.564
C (Interviewer Status)	1.25	1	1.25	.798
AB	6.05	1	6.05	3.862*
AC	6.05	1	6.05	3.862*
BC	7.20	1	7.20	4.596*
ABC	.20	1	.20	.128
Error (within)	112.80	72	1.567	

*$p < .05$

Table 2

Means and SD's of Self-disclosure by Interviewer Status, Interviewer Sex, and Subject Sex

	High Status				Low Status			
Subject Sex	Male Interviewer		Female Interviewer		Male Interviewer		Female Interviewer	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Males	4.3	1.059	4.5	1.581	3.0	1.155	4.1	1.370
Females	4.7	.949	3.6	1.578	4.4	1.075	4.6	1.075

Note.-N = 80; n per subject sex x interviewer sex x interviewer status=10.